

IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: Micah Swafford
202-225-2132

Istook Requests Federal Funds for I-40

Washington, DC – Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) requested a total of \$28 million for transportation projects in downtown Oklahoma City including \$20 million for relocation of the Interstate 40 Crosstown Expressway.

“The Crosstown Expressway carries traffic from across the country,” said Istook. **“It is a vital artery for Oklahoma as well as the entire federal highway system. This additional funding will help avoid any delays in the construction process.”**

In separate letters, Istook also requested \$6.4 million for the purchase of vans, buses, trolley buses, and facility improvements for the OKC transit system and \$1.5 million for the reconstruction of an off-ramp at Harrison Ave in downtown OKC.

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation expects the total cost of the I-40 project to exceed \$300 million dollars. In 1998, the Oklahoma delegation helped secure \$103 million in federal funds for the project. Istook wrote to Chairman Rogers that because of the expense of the project, he expected that ODOT would require further funding in future years.

The full text of the I-40 request follows:

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman, Subcommittee on Transportation and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers:

As you put together the FY2003 Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, I would like to bring to your attention a matter of great importance to the State of Oklahoma and respectfully request your assistance in securing \$20 million in the Federal Highway Administration fiscal year 2003 budget to assist the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) with the realignment of the Interstate 40 Crosstown Expressway in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The total estimated cost of this project, scheduled for completion by fiscal year 2010, is approximately \$300 million. Thus, I expect ODOT to require further funding in future years.

Interstate 40 traverses Oklahoma from Texas to Arkansas and spans the nation from California to North Carolina. The I-40 “Crosstown Expressway” stretches across Oklahoma City’s downtown, handling more than 100,000 vehicles each day, with over 60% of the truck traffic from out-of-state. The two-mile bridge portion in the heart of downtown is the longest bridge in Oklahoma.

The fracture-critical bridge design on the expressway exceeded engineering standards when originally built in the 1960's, but the structure is ineffective and extremely below today’s engineering standards. Improvements are necessary due to increased traffic volumes, and massive interstate demands on the structure.

Currently, overweight trucks are not allowed on the Crosstown Expressway Bridge. Joint failures are common and the concrete deck must be replaced. In 1989, a crack was detected in a cross member and the eastbound lanes were completely closed while the repairs were made. Inspections of the structure are completed twice as often as required in order to ensure the safety of the traveling public.

In response to these needs, ODOT has been working since 1995 to determine the best solution to the problem. During that time, an exhaustive effort at consensus building has taken place within the community. Evidence of the effectiveness of these efforts can be seen in the fact that during the public comment period on the Final Environmental Impact Statement, just 30 comments were received. These numbers are unprecedented for a project of this magnitude in an urban environment.

ODOT anticipates that the FHA will soon sign the Record of Decision, thus clearing with right-of-way acquisition and

project design phases. These phases will quickly expend the funds previously appropriated for this project and position ODOT to begin construction later this year. Currently, the groundbreaking is tentatively scheduled for May 6.

The realignment of the I-40 Crosstown Expressway is an expensive undertaking. If constructed today, the approximately \$300 million project would consume most of Oklahoma's state highway budget for an entire year. This is, by far, the most compelling transportation project in Oklahoma's history.

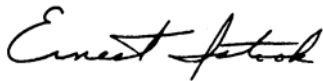
This project is not only of great significance to the State of Oklahoma, however. It will also impact the entire nation's transportation infrastructure as well. This is evidenced in the fact that Interstates 35, 40 and 44 all intersect in Oklahoma City and extend in six directions, from Mexico to Canada and coast to coast. Furthermore, I-35 and I-40 are key corridors in the North American Free Trade Agreement and are expected to continue to experience increases in national and international travel.

Mr. Chairman, in light of all this information, it is not difficult to see how great an impact this project will have on the infrastructure and economy of Oklahoma as well as on the entire United States. The realignment of the Crosstown Expressway is truly vital to Oklahoma City, the State of Oklahoma and the nation.

It is with all this in mind that I respectfully request your assistance in providing \$20 million to the Federal Highway Administration this year in order to assist the Oklahoma Department of Transportation with the realignment of the Interstate 40 Crosstown Expressway in Oklahoma City.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. Please contact Kevin Johnson of my staff at x5-2132 should you require any additional information.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ernest J. Fritch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.